

In early September of 2011, Vivian at *Notes from the Vomitorium* conducted a four-day email interview with Joseph Nechvatal about the art of noise.



Joseph Nechvatal, *sprinkle excitatiOn*, silk scarf

Notes from the Vomitorium: Let's start with the new book *Immersion into Noise*. I'm really looking forward to hearing your responses.

In the introduction you mention how 'the creative art of noise draws us closer to our inner world', could you expand upon this? I read this as an interior aspect of creation being reflected most truly as noise, in a rather Cartesian sense of thinking about 'truth' and the 'world' - the brain in the vat

example etc. Is 'noise' in this sense the most ontologically sound, or as proximal (exterior) phenomena we could hope to communicate in and witness - is this what make 'noise' so important?

Joseph Nechvatal: I think that our inner world is very much unlike a brain in a vat in that such a model cuts through the connectivity that I see, hear and feel in my inner world as connecting to your thoughts - and my entire outer world. That buzzing connection is my truth. While noise is often considered as coming externally into a non-noise entity (an us), I think that a creative use of noise can also be viewed diagrammatized as an integral part of the same function of that system (us) - and so accorded a position *within* the diagrammatic structure (instead of residing as unmixed noise outside us). But your question opens up so much of what I have been thinking since completing the book (late-2009) in terms of art as inner genesis. I have gone on thinking about aural and visual noise as a means of exploring difference and multiplicity as spectral material held in infinite suspense – something akin to an iniquitous spiritual ecstasy. This means for me an ontological self-as-wonder – but for all of us. Noise is what one makes of it. And what one makes with it. As it shape shifts.

NftV: Perhaps I'm thinking of Noise in a far too simplistic, far too solid a sense?

Would Noise (and its inherent possibilities for creativities - interiorized and exteriorized) be more akin to a phenomenon that is born from the two never meeting parallels of interiority and exteriority simultaneously (in both artist and viewer\ s for examples sake)? Through multiple exchanges and inter-receptions of communication - mind's eye, praxis, execution, viewer

reception, viewer interpretation - on so on? Noise as an aspect of these gaps - but nonetheless also a mode of creativities mechanics and communications? Noise as a hint that undoubtedly we are more than likely to be sharing the same world, but only existing/being visible through the spaces between both our endologics and exologics?

I suppose you could/should argue that your sentiments concerning Noise are contrary to the brain in the vat idea? Noise as proof against this Cartesian doubt?

JOSEPH NECHVATAL: You raise an interesting point about noise never meeting parallels of interiority and exteriority. But I do not agree with that. For me, art noise hums exactly in the fold between interiority and exteriority, where they *do* meet. Certainly I agree with you that art noise may have an aspect where gaps of creative mechanics and communication function as non-communication. That is why in *Immersion into Noise* I pin art noise to Gilles Deleuze's notion of the *vacuole*. This concept of noncommunication comes from Deleuze's *Postscript on Control Societies* - a notion he pulled out of the work of William S. Burroughs. A vacuole is like a sac in a cell's membrane, completely bound up inside the cell but also separate from it. So yes, kind of like space between both our endologics and exologics (whatever endologics and exologics is). Your fucking with me, right?

NftV: Well, that's, not quite what I meant actually! Hard to describe as it's juggling a few ideas at once. Ultimate Interiority and Ultimate Exteriority are parallels - they run side by side but never meet (however both are

theoretical and not thinkable - but I'll leave that for now), and somewhere between the two, with the communications and mechanics, the 'tuning of a praxis', 'perception' and a 'viewers reception of art' etc. etc. Between all the things that go between an artist's interiority and the viewer's perception of this externalized interior (this is interior itself because it's a perception) - is where noise is? So it's vital to have these two problematic poles of inner and outer, without these Noise would not be? -But it's quite ethereal and ever changing - not to simplify the idea too crudely but perhaps sharing just some of the dynamics of a zeitgeist maybe - with regards to its existence between myriad parties endologix and exologics. Maybe worth mentioning the Klein Bottle at this point.

I hope we are thinking about Noise along the same lines? Endologics and Exologics - ha, yeah, I'm a devil for making up my own portmanteau instead of actually explaining the notion fully! Endo=Inner, Exo=Outer, Logics=thinking linear, reason... Personally I find it easier and more concise to use these weird terms rather than get bogged down in descriptions over and over again...

JOSEPH NECHVATAL: No problem with the made-up lingo so long as we don't speak past each other. I enjoy your terms now that I understand them. You have pulled off a state of externalized interiority.

But I think that, yes, we are thinking about noise along different lines. I am thinking about it as I defined it (mostly visually) in *Immersion into Noise* – that is, with an emphasis on perception and reception in art. One way to apprehend a theoretical ambient noise art field's *felt scopic atmosphere* is to think of it in terms of a study of *cognitive-visual acoustics*. This is equitable in that sight itself is nothing other than a continuous pattern of perpetually

changing light-data recorded on the retina which we process through the aggregated internal acts of discerning.

This idea of a form of cognitive-noise-perceiving is continuously allocated by tones of recognition, ranges of totality, and distributed visual echoes as humans produce a full interpretation of the plethoric information which hits their retinas in order to assign it cultural meaning. More precisely, such an acoustic-like cognitive-visuality would involve the equivalent of what in acoustics is called *envelope* - as visual attention has characteristics of attack, growth, duration, and decay in terms of peripheral spatial intelligence (when self-attended to). Such attention calls for the viewer's active and self-conscious engagement with art.

NftV: I think I understand now - so Noise is really very similar to regular 'acoustic Noise', not sound outright but the strange phenomena that occurs in the world it's sounding in etc. Noise is definitely the right word you chose! Seems very apt. Thinking about Noise as a cognitive and visual phenomena following a not dissimilar dynamic to regular 'acoustic noise'. I'm a wannabe hi-fi geek so do have some appreciation of the slippery nature of acoustics, some things one senses, some things one actually hears for example.

Could perhaps you talk about works that are strong examples of how 'Noise' is present, how that relies on 'Noise'? As culturally loaded or ambiguous as you like! Or, to get a little deeper into things, talk about an example of art that you feel changed its envelope over time, as history and the (cognitive) space it inhabits morphs?

JOSEPH NECHVATAL: It is exactly this slippery aspect of all types of noise that interests me. Binary positions of in and out don't last long when

thinking about noise. For example, Ludwig van Beethoven's *Grosse Fuge* (1825) sounded like noise to his audience at the time of its creation. Beethoven's publishers persuaded him to remove it from its original setting as the last movement of a string quartet. He did so, replacing it with a sparkling *Allegro*, and they subsequently published it separately. Would anyone think of Beethoven's *Grosse Fuge* as noise now? No.

As for examples of works that make a strong case in point of how cognitive and visual noise is present: the entire mid-section of *Immersion into Noise* goes through my history of such works, starting with the *Apse of Lascaux*.

I should perhaps mention a slightly more recent audio example here: that of Luigi Russolo, a futurist painter who was perhaps the first noise music artist. His 1913 manifesto, *L'Arte dei Rumori*, translated as *The Art of Noises*, stated that the industrial revolution had given modern men a greater capacity to appreciate more complex sounds. Russolo found traditional melodic music confining and envisioned noise music as its future replacement. He designed and constructed a number of noise-generating devices called *Intronarumori* and assembled a noise orchestra to perform with them.

A performance of his *Gran Concerto Futuristico* (1917) was met with strong disapproval and violence from the audience, as Russolo himself had predicted. None of his intoning devices have survived, though recently some have been reconstructed and used in performances. Many artists are now familiar with his manifesto.

But as far as art that changed its envelope over time, as history and the (cognitive) space it inhabits morphed: I would pick the prime example of anti-art; Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* of 1917. Of course, anti-art is the definition of a work of art that may be exhibited or delivered in a conventional context but makes fun of serious art or challenges the nature of

art. Yet it cannot help itself from being considered art. So it moves from being not art into the envelope of art.

Such was the noisy mechanamorphic impulse of Duchamp's works from 1911-1912, and the machine works that follow his exposure to Raymond Roussel, are an inescapable point of reference for avant-garde noise of the 20th century. The machine in that century, for Duchamp, was the symbol of total bliss through pure mentality and auto-sexual autonomy in contradiction to the horror that mechanized war had brought. By hypnotizing attention, the noisy machine freed Duchamp from troubling obsessions and personal hang-ups through the alternative model of android life; intimating both a rush of desperation and an ecstatic release, refracted through a web of glazed impersonality. If the machine, as a representative of noise, was a fascination Duchamp used to balance out ineptness, whether of the mind or flesh, his mechanamorphic production and machine forms refigured the human body into an almost mechanized substance. In *The Bride Stripped Bare by the Bachelors, Even*, which positions a central bride machine over a bachelor apparatus, Duchamp, with the strictness of machinery, applies fantasy to seduction and masturbation. In a way, Duchamp suggests that we (as viewers) can use his art as a vehicle for self-transcendence into a kind of dream world of nonsense sex. By mechanizing sex and dreams, this nonsense of the sex machine converts sexual energy into artistic noise energy.

But the preferred decisive point in understanding immersion into noise in the context of art is its facilitation of a more potent *conscious-totality* in the art audience produced by merging the audience's perceptual circuitry with the artwork.

Ultimately for me, though, noise is just a *rupture signifying transmission of excess and/or negativity* for the artist to employ or disregard at will. It can be lavish

and thrilling. It can be incredibly tedious and boring.

NftV: I suppose that Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* is perhaps another example of Noise/noise and also another example of classical music riots.

Using art as a primer, a space to generate such "potent *conscious-totality* in the art audience" brings to mind a number of works that are only completed upon the viewers active engagement - for example Rirkirt Tiravanija's works or the recent Piccadilly Community Centre - both only function upon viewer engagement, but also neither strictly create the conscious-totality in the audience (that you mention), just requiring active participation is not really the criteria here.

Biophilia by Mark Cypher may create noise, I imagine the participant's endless reflexivity upon the fact that they are moving the art, they are the art and that they are an intrinsic part of the art - thinking around the artists intentions but putting them in the epicenter of visuals and consequences.

JOSEPH NECHVATAL: Yes. Even when we narrow our scope just to classical music, it is still quite interesting. Another early example is *Parade*, a performance produced at the Chatelet Theatre, Paris, on May 18, 1917, that was conceived by Jean Cocteau, with design by Pablo Picasso, choreography by Leonid Massine, and music by Eric Satie. The extra-musical materials used in the production were referred to as *trompe l'oreille* sounds by Coctueau and included a dynamo, Morse code machine, sirens, steam engine, airplane motor, and typewriters.

In *Futurism and Musical Notes*, Daniele Lombardi discusses the mysterious case

of the French composer Carol-Bérard; a pupil of Isaac Albeniz. Carol-Bérard is said to have composed a *Symphony of Mechanical Forces* in 1910 – but little evidence has emerged thus far to establish this assertion.

Arseny Avraamov's composition *Symphony of Factory Sirens* involved navy ship sirens and whistles, bus and car horns, factory sirens, cannons, foghorns, artillery guns, machine guns, hydro-airplanes, a specially designed steam-whistle machine creating noisy renderings of Internationale and Marseillaise for a piece conducted by a team using flags and pistols when performed in the city of Baku in 1922. In 1923 Arthur Honegger created *Pacific 231*, a modernist musical composition that imitates the sound of a steam locomotive.

Another example is Ottorino Respighi's 1924 orchestral piece *Pines of Rome*, which included the phonographic playback of a nightingale recording. Also in 1924 George Antheil created a work entitled *Ballet Mécanique* with instrumentation that included 16 pianos, 3 airplane propellers, and 7 electric bells. The work was originally conceived as music for the Dada film of the same name, by Dudley Murphy and Fernand Léger, but in 1926 it premiered independently as a concert piece.

In 1930 Paul Hindemith and Ernst Toch recycled records to create sound montages and in 1936 Edgard Varese experimented with records, playing them backwards, and at varying speeds. Varese had earlier used sirens to create what he called a "continuous flowing curve" of sound that he could not achieve with acoustic instruments. In 1931 Varese's *Ionisation* for 13 players featured 2 sirens, a lion's roar, and used 37 percussion instruments to create a repertoire of unpitched sounds making it the first musical work to be organized solely on the basis of noise. In remarking on Varese's contributions the American composer John Cage stated that Varese had

“established the present nature of music" and that he had "moved into the field of sound itself while others were still discriminating 'musical tones' from noises.”

Your other art examples amply make my point that visual-cognitive noise is a hidden key component in visual and electronic art today. I might include my own recent work as another example: *asstrOnOmical affected autOmata*

<http://youtu.be/zgd-m8miJpw>

NftV: I noticed that your linked video of work *asstrOnOmical affected autOmata* is used as a video response to Thou Art That talking about Speculative Realism. Noticing this just boosted a notion I had at the back of my mind regarding Noise. Speculative Realism explores the metaphysical 'aspects' of the empirical/sensory data world around us, or raises the questions about the dynamics between these things... I remember seeing Hecker's Speculative Solution at The Tate Britain/Urbanomic Event - The Real Thing and thinking that if I believe, if I apply myself (standing with a group of people who also want to experience the same revelation as myself in a large hall, a massive established public space), then it's there in two respects - endo-logically but also via sensory - exo-data (and here the two concepts of pareidolia and apophenia raise their heads). Noise could arguably operate under a similar syndrome of onto-mechanics? So does religion in many ways - do you have any thoughts about the macro-context of Noise with regards to the secular space we are inhabiting today, in some ways I'm asking if Speculative Realism and/or Nechvatalian Noise quenches (perhaps for some) a theo(god)philic(love/r) thirst?

JOSEPH NECHVATAL: Yes, that Speculative Realism has been wetting the parched dryness of a mislaid metaphysical inquisitiveness recently - a metaphysical inquisitiveness that art has been (since its beginnings) continuously jacked into. Certainly an art of noise, by its very nature, must retain its speculative character because of the impossibility of attaining conclusive experimental data in art. But I am especially interested in what I perceive as Speculative Realism's ties to Pataphysics. I discuss pataphysical noise in my book's Conclusion: *Noise Against Oblivion*. What I find relevant here is Speculative Realism's yearnings to surpass, as you say, the "empirical/sensory data world around us" in that Pataphysics is involved with the anti-scientific realm beyond metaphysics that examines the laws that preside over *exceptions*—an attempt to elucidate an imaginary cosmos. Alfred Jarry specifically defined Pataphysics as the "science of imaginary solutions, which symbolically attributes the properties of objects, described by their virtuality, to their lineaments." Pareidolia and apophenia are very salient concepts here - and I am pleased that you raised their weird heads. I wonder if you saw Richard Wright's *Turner Prize* show at Tate Britain (London) in 2009-2010? For me viewing Wright's pareidolia-like *no title* (2009) set in motion a collection of considerations about the contemporary condition of noise in art. I think I can sum it up for you by saying that the success of Wright's large, but delicate, wall mural signaled to me the return of magical immersive noise thinking into mainstream art at the expense of the pop icon/logo. Its gold, monochromatic (but kaleidoscopic) ground dominated its configuration, producing an all-over fervor that needed to be interacted with imaginatively.

I felt immediately a sense of languor in the room. People were in no hurry to move along. Rather, they seem immersed in their own mirrored filigreed realms. Clearly we were in the presence of an invitation to noise reverie.

The composition has a distinct resemblance to the kind of work I was doing in 1991-92 when I first uploaded my drawings into a computer and began mirroring them with Photoshop. My companion at the museum also pointed out that Wright's mural shares its structure with pioneers of algorithmic art, such as Roman Verostko, especially his series *Epigenesis: The Growth of Form* from 1997—pen and ink drawings executed with a multi-pen plotter coupled to a PC—or the mirroring manipulations in the early 90s work of the British artist Carl Fudge based on the Durer etching, *Resurrection*.

I was slightly annoyed by the uneven lighting that produced distinct hot spots on what should have been a unified undifferentiated field. But nevertheless, this golden work (not at all typical of Wright's other temporary murals) made opportune a re-appropriation of my finer senses in a way similar to the experience of my listening to the prepared piano *Sonatas* and *Interludes* of John Cage. It was more noise affective than discursive, more enigmatic than dogmatic. The work was full of complex inter-relational transitions and rhythmic overlapping, interlacing perceptions. It displayed noisy elasticity by coupling sameness with difference. Forms emerge from other forms, both up and down in scale, and nested within larger units, so that things became component parts of other things. Image-formations surfaced from the depths of our mind.

If the primary feature distinguishing aesthetic noise consciousness is glitched imagination, it is worth recalling that imagination's two components, visioning and symbolizing, are integral to heightening perception and intuition. Indecision, ambiguity and conflict became dynamic and useful.

The apparitions and angelic visual pleasures concealed in the florid ground of *no title* turned apparent “flaws,” such as the all-over ambivalence of the mural’s superficially illusory groundlessness, into affirmative values.

That was the interfering shift I detected in what I think of as the *responsibility of looking*—a shift towards (and into) *visual noise*. Here I could re-appropriate my fragile capacity to visualize in a field where the noise of bewilderment and indistinctness govern. Here was an interiorly reverberating resonance that could not be appropriated by capital. Here one feels oneself feeling as a first person singular. This is a shift towards an anti-pop, no-logo emancipatory labor. One that is indicative of social relationships outside of passive pop consumption. Here I could take back my head.

Caught in the cognitive interactions of its florid web, I drifted off into the Tate’s permanent collection and was rewarded by a similarly mirrored and webbed enticement in the lace collar depicted by Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger in his *Mary Rogers, Lady Harington*. So Richard Wright’s *no title* seemed to be pointing me at a reevaluation of how to look at high art, and to the necessity of our re-conceiving it in our time as an art of inner noise.

Would you be more specific about “macro-context of Noise with regards to the secular space we are inhabiting”? Which macro-context are you think of?

NftV: “macro-context of Noise with regards to the secular space we are inhabiting” = Massive, historic context. Religion has always played a massive role in life. Capitalism (a worthy surrogate in my unpopular opinion) lets us project our beliefs and values upon an artwork, essentially seeing what is not there, interpreting what may or may not be there and giving energies to innate objects, like dark matter (but I won't rope science into question just yet). I wondered if you ever contemplated upon the possible similarities

between religious dynamics of old and the belief of Noise. Like Dark Matter, and some speculative realist art pieces and also religion and capitalism (bourdieuan capital, cultural capitals etc.) the worth is, intrinsically non definable objectively but subjectively obvious - sensed in ones mind's eye.

JOSEPH NECHVATAL: I see. Well, it occurs to me that there is nothing more massive than that groaning connect-break-connect cosmos where noise of one sort or another is everywhere. Of course, excess noise radiation indicates that the universe is continuously expanding. Unsystematic activity at the molecular level suggests that the universe consists primarily of processes of noise. So any massive topos for the universe must be in its very constitution indeterminate, noisy, complex, unified and unsatisfactory.

That does not tend to go down well in the realm of most religious dynamics that have achieved dominance recently. But I think it is permissible to say that this noise-state has become emblematic of our consciousness.

I say this because in a sense we are living in what might be called the *noise age*, as we daily attempt to orient ourselves in the noise of the expanded immersive electronic field. Certainly it is true that hidden in us and in connected computer-space there is something so noisy, abstract, so large, so astounding, and so pregnant with the darkness of infinite space that it excites and frightens us and thus returns us to the experimental and to a state of stimulating abstract desire and restlessness. In one sense artists are prepared for this state better than most in that the history of abstract art has shown us that consciousness may refuse to recognize all thought as existing in the space of clean and clear representation, and by scanning the space of representation art may formulate the knowledge of the laws that provide its de-compressed noisiness.

But with an abstract comprehension of the noise age, art theory itself needs to take on a new sense of de-compressed spirit and redefine itself from the omni-perspective view found in immersive cyberspace. It is neither surprising nor coincidental that an epistemological change in art theory would follow connectionist noise developments inherent in hyper-media as the immense perspective of connected computer-space requires us to question the legitimacy of commonly held beliefs and the forgone conclusions established concerning the theoretical issues of sexual politics, multiculturalism, gender studies and the far-reaching heterogeneous philosophical critique of the cultural mechanisms of representation which have preceded it. The desire to theorizes this sense of the infinite and the spectacular via noise has lead me to a field of theoretical interests that I have amassing under the rubric of *noise theory*: a broken AND connection theory which is everywhere, all the time, all at once.

If this sounds like “religion and capitalism” it does so as tragedy.

It is a well-worn *cliché* by now that we live in the era of information overload - hence a connectionist noise theory which purports to attempt an art noise of the extended virtual-field presupposes we have reached an orientational level of symbol density and we are now able to combine many individual symbols into complex noise relationships, or chunks, of information which can then be treated as single megasymbols. However, since it is impossible to make sense of today's swirling phantasmagorical stimulus, the general proposition behind a theory of noise is one of ripe delirium, as noise pulses with higher and higher flows of data to the point of near hysteria. In my view, it is noise theory's job to find out what unconventional un-connectionist sense this uncertainty might make to us, and to see how blocks of the chaos of information might start to sympathetically vibrate with each

other based on a decadent reading of our electronic media environment.

So as far as a “religious dynamic” is concerned, I think the only similarities are those related to infinity, the sublime, excess and ecstasy. Rather, noise theory is compatible with and comparable to chaos theory, the contemporary theory which stems from physics, biology and mathematics which is closely associated with poststructuralist theory. While classical sciences isolated physical systems from their surroundings, chaos theory is founded on the realization that all systems in nature are connected and subject to flows of matter and energy which move constantly through them.

A noise theory cognizant of the same principles of connectivity would begin with the presumption that a theory bomb has exploded, showering us with bits of theory shrapnel, drastically changing the way in which we perceive and act, even in our private dream worlds. This realization may lead us back to Michel Foucault's analysis of Raymond Roussel's *Fin-de-Siècle* invention of dreamy language machines that produced texts through the use of repetitions and combination-permutations, as a dream-like and machine-like logic provided Roussel's writing with a seemingly endless variety of textual combinations flowing in circular form. As described in Foucault's book *Raymond Roussel: Death and the Labyrinth*, Roussel's technique and its process of endless development lends itself well to the creation of unforeseen, automatic and spontaneously inventive theories which give the reader a feeling of being pulled into the noise of eternity through the ceaseless constructions of theory itself, transmitting an altered and exalted state of mind to the reader as it systematically imposes a formless anxiety through its labyrinthine extensions, doublings, disguises and duplications.

Most salient to my noise theory is Foucault's analysis of Roussel's final book, *How I Wrote Certain of My Books*, which contains and repeats within its

mechanism all the mental-machines he had formerly described and put into motion, and by doing so making evident the master-machine which produced all of his previous text-machines. Hence Roussel presents to us a model of theoretical perfection: a theory machine which functions independently of time and space, pulling theory into a developmental logic of the infinite. Hoist by its own petard.

So yes, in terms of what you call “massive historic context” I may not omit this internal logic of the infinite and its tragic drama which I find potentially interesting for noise theory - for it must be remembered that electronic theory itself resides in a field of virtual immersive perceptions at once seamless and fragmented - made up of electronic energies corresponding to the new combination of space and time. An immersive perspective without horizon. Thus noise theory might be considered as an osmotic membrane, a blotter of ubiquity resulting in the atomization and disintegration of normal information and data. This merges noise theory into its proper network of circulation - demystifying the ideology of its reproduction and intervening in its system of cultural interpretations.

Whereas religious pre-noise theory is made up of conventional, rigid, social representations, my noise theory makes use of the abstract potential of the connected, all-encompassing sign-field. Thus it is unconventional, and therefore demonstrative of the real arbitrary nature of all representations, as I learned from Michel Foucault's *The Order of Things*. Hence noise theory may offer art the opportunity for the creation of relevant and applicable anti-social theories (abstract, ecstatic, and/or antiseptic) which may continue to move and multiply.

Noise theory opens thought up to new spaces of malleable and combinatory sites that exceeds religious sentiment through a perpetual multiplication of

significance. It does so by creating a hybrid of inner meaning and cosmic inference, thereby opening up a glitchy territory of signification in which to connect and create a chain of decoded and deterritorialized meanings into new megasymbols.

NftV: Noise theories inter-exchanging dynamics are certainly more malleable than traditional religions, I appreciate that - but I still feel there are some belief-based similarities in the mechanics of reception, thought certainly more liquid in nature.

Cyber theory and our collective interaction and emersion with the sprawling online ether have been a concern of mine (theoretically) for some time now. There are many examples of how online cultures are evolving the way we think; younger people do have slightly different cognitive processes than older people mostly because of their deep engagement with the internet through their formative years. Music, literature and artistic practices are changing as this new landscape of interactions and communications emerges.

Do you feel that enquiries and explorations into Noise are best suited to traditional modes or online modes of poly-ontologous engagements? I appreciate that that essentially Noise would transcend both, but which is more fruitful or progressive in this respect? If neither, are there any differences subject to Noise?

JOSEPH NECHVATAL: You make a good point about reception, as it is clearly important to an art of noise that offends yet allows us to look into own underlying assumptions of sacred superfluity. Noise in art, I think, as you suggest, can face us up to the radical implications of sacred superfluity

while purging us from conventional ways of thinking by making no recourse to imagined exterior principles or a priori assumptions. It theorizes principles of linkages, of connectivity, and breaks of the intersection of all non-noise god theories, giving rise to theoretical production and the creativity of the poly.

May I just say that this escape from previous non-noise religious theories has the most urgent political/social ramifications in our media society. This is so as this new noise theory has a well-founded but ambiguous urge for epistemological reconfiguration based on the capacity of connected electronic media's immeasurable (and ultimately noisy homogenous) intermixtures that provides the definition of the material links that abet and break communications while also expressing the laws of composition and decomposition that administer it. Hence this noise theory can be, in a sense, the abstract theory of all representation when it attempts to orient itself in the unlimited field of representation, which utilitarian ideology attempts to scrutinize in accordance with a step-by-step, discursive method but which now appears as noise metaphysics, but a noise metaphysics which abstraction helps to step outside of itself. Thus perhaps its intention is to achieve an ultimate integration of consciousness by the dissolving of theory into its original unmanifested ground (symbolic of stark unconsciousness) and of infinite complexity in unity.

This dynamic interdependence of electronic forms of noise in contemplative vision is certainly poly and as so represents the ultimate in re-configuration, one that subsumes our world of simulation/representation into a nexus of over-lapping unity of mind which equals an understanding of the unity which ties the whole universe into a single noise, linking observations of the outer world with precise extractions of human essence. This noisy view of

theory, brought to a certain sense of pliability, offers a double prospect: first, the solipsistic images of theoretical excess, and then, as in a psychedelic glamour, in the reverberant structure of the unfolding total-theory-work.

This assertion on my part concerning theoretical noise consciousness as possibly being multiple and unified simultaneously combines into an all-inclusive private picture the segregated forces and particles of noise through sympathetic vibration, just as the strings of a piano do, especially when tuned to the system called *just intonation*.

If what I have said above sounds slightly religiously metaphysical, it is metaphysical only in so far as it is memory, intensity, and stratosphere all working together in making up an internal model of the self. My noise theory's central mission is in addressing information now as a personalized megasymbol. Hence my art noise theory is non-linear, yet it displays long-term tendencies and organizational patterns and principle of becoming in and through constant mutation. It is a principle of intermingling micro-relations in an ongoing processes of macro-relations. Therefore it theorizes principles of transversality and of contaminations within the personal obsessions of the individual.

But I don't want to suggest that noise cannot also impact on society at large. It can and does at times. For example, the entry of recorded noise into popular rock music can be traced to *Tomorrow Never Knows*, the final track of The Beatles' 1966 studio album *Revolver*. Credited as a Lennon/McCartney song, it was written primarily by John Lennon. The track included looped tape effects. For the track Paul McCartney supplied a bag of 1/4-inch audio tape loops he had made at home after listening to Stockhausen's *Gesang der Jünglinge*. By disabling the erase head of a tape recorder and then spooling a continuous loop of tape through the machine while recording, the tape

would constantly overdub itself, creating a saturation effect, a technique also used in *musique concrète*. The tape could also be induced to go faster and slower.

McCartney encouraged the other Beatles to use the same effects and create their own loops. After experimentation on their own, the various Beatles supplied a total of 30 or so tape loops to George Martin, who selected 16 for use on the song. Each loop was about six seconds long. The tape loops were played on BTR3 tape machines located in various studios of the Abbey Road building and controlled by EMI technicians in studio two at Abbey Road. Each machine was monitored by one technician who had to keep a pencil within each loop to maintain tension. The four Beatles controlled the faders of the mixing console while Martin varied the stereo panning and Geoff Emerick watched the meters. Eight of the tapes were used at one time, changed halfway through the song. The tapes were made (like most of the other loops) by superimposition and acceleration. According to Martin, the finished mix of the tape loops cannot be repeated because of the complex and random way in which they were laid over the music.

But most notable in this vein is *Revolution 9*, a track produced in 1968 by The Beatles for *The White Album*. It made sole use of sound collage, credited to Lennon/McCartney, but created primarily by John Lennon with assistance from George Harrison and Yoko Ono. Lennon said he was trying to paint a picture of a revolution using sound. The composition is similar to the avant-garde Fluxus style of Ono as well as the *musique concrète* works of composers such as Pierre Schaeffer and Pierre Henry.

NftV: Yes, I wholly echo the notions you raise in the second and third paragraphs, there is very much an ontological chasing of the horizon, and

infinite regression formed from feedback and infinite receptions and animations. Noise and Religion will always share an unseen foundation, a bottomless foundation. Painting a mirror problem, every move changes what you are painting, you will never paint the reflection.

I'd say this aspect of the dynamics similarities is a massive realm to explore, through art too as well as theoretically.

Changing topic slightly - or operating across different lines - my understanding of contemporary music is subjective, but I believe that there is a pandemic salvaging of past histories - because no new history is available (due in part to the noisy, cyber, data saturated, infinitely transparent and oddly (as addresses previously) ultimately opaque/claustraphobically subjective world we inhabit. So echo's and collage, remix and reference are the only tools left to create a context, something new cannot be made without a context being seen/heard by the listener. So a control of existing materials emerges in almost all aspects of modern genres. Also a laboring occurs, music is transformed into a leitmotif or a slo-mo homage.

Could Noise be seen as an alternative to this? Finding newness through the massive shifting matrix? What are your thoughts on Noise's possibilities to become active independent of this (salvage-phile, neophobic) syndrome?

JOSEPH NECHVATAL: I tend to deduce that definitely noise is a possible alternative to thanatophilic re-mix cultural conservatism - even while acknowledging that the history of avant-garde culture is a rich tippie from which we can draw intoxicating stimulus. Morton Feldman once said something interesting about the quality of noisy newness in his text *Sound, Noise, Varèse, Boulez*: that “noise is incomprehensible yet it is noise that we

truly seek since the greatest truth lies behind the greatest resistance.” If we take his thought on resistance sincerely, and opposition remains an ambition for art, then cultural newness still has some probability to emerge out of the massive necrophilia syndrome. But what is obligatory is an innovative fortitude of looking beyond.

Lucio Fontana often said that the canvas for him was primarily there not for what it is or for what it represents but to show that we can look and move through it. It is for this reason that he punctured holes (*buchi*) in his canvases as a means of integrating the theoretical space represented on the surface of his paintings with the tangible space that surrounded them.

Fontana, in his last interview with Tommaso Trini said that, “The evolution of art is something internal, something philosophical and is not a visual phenomenon. Speaking of the *buchi* in a late interview, Fontana said, "...the discovery of the cosmos is a new dimension, it is the infinite, so I make a hole in this canvas, which was the basis of all the arts, and I have created an infinite dimension (...) that is precisely the idea, it is a new dimension corresponding with the cosmos. The hole was precisely to create that void there at the back."

Concerning this puncturing of holes, Fontana said in the last interview that "...if any of my discoveries are important the *buchi* (hole) is. By the *buchi* I meant going outside the limitations of a picture frame and being free in one's conception of art. (...) I make a hole in the canvas in order to leave behind me the old pictorial formulae, the painting and the traditional view of art and I escape symbolically, but also materially, from the prison of the flat surface."

To make the point in specifically heightened immersive terms, Fontana created in 1952 a ceiling peppered with his punctured buchis for the Kursaal

at Varazza which also incorporated low-angled lighting. He repeated the gesture on the ceiling of a cinema in Breda the following year. For Fontana however, space no longer functioned, as it did for the Futurists, in the context of the image (the flow of space around sculpture or the implied space of painting), but it became the palpable field in which his proto-cyber spatial method took shape. Hence he literally transgressed abstract painting's support, refusing the illusory for the actual, activating ambient space and the technological allure that envelops post-modern life.

I raise the example of Fontana here in order to show an example of an art desire that might reterritorialized us. But we can talk about cultural noise in the abstract too, as a polyvocal epidemic or contagion. As a basis of becoming.

NftV: Oh, wow - your calling the remix crazed artists thanatophilic?!?! Fantastic! Presume this is most applicable to Mark and Dinos Chapmans Insult to Injury Series! This is perhaps the polar opposite of your hopes with regard to art and art with Noise etc.

Your comments about Fontana are interesting, and maybe elucidate how much importance you feel is to be found in and around Noise's employment and presence in Contemporary Art. Without being too simplistic, would you say that Noise is your Buchi? Have similar potentialities as Fontana's Buchi - or the potential he hoped?

JOSEPH NECHVATAL: I have nothing particular against the work of the Chapmans. I just don't find them or Maurizio Cattelan or Jeff Koons or Takashi Murakami at all interesting in terms of the complexity of noise as I've been talking about it above and in the book. Their sort of one-liner art is

closer to the pop logo aesthetic that for me cultural noise strives to make problematic. In that sense, an overly tight focus on Fontana's *Buchi* should also be avoided.

But it is true that my noise production has been hovering around holes in the human body, most recently retinas and anuses. That again will be the emphasis in my New York show this May that I am thinking of calling *errant anusmOs*. The idea is to link the individual through noise to the universe in a way that is not overly human so we can imaginatively re-place ourselves inside the context of the Dionysian flux of cosmological nature. There is an image from this series of paintings on the cover of my *Immersion into Noise* book called *sOuth pOle*.

It has been enjoyable and fascinating talking with you. I will just leave you with the suggestion that noise, as I see it, is an obscure (w)hole of intense potentialities that gives artists the capacity to speculate, fabricate, and think and act otherwise.